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## SHAKESPEARE AND AESCHYLUS

Numerous parallelisms between Shakespeare and the Greek tragedians have been indicated, especially by James Russell Lowell<sup>1</sup> and J. Churton Collins.<sup>2</sup> The two following similarities, which have not been pointed out so far as I know, are not offered as evidence of familiarity with Greek drama on Shakespeare's part, but merely as coincidences.

1. Antony's use of Caesar's robe in his funeral address strongly suggests the passage in the *Choephori* of Aeschylus in which Orestes displays the blood-stained cloth or garment which the murderers had thrown about his father, Agamemnon, to overcome his resistance to their weapons.

*Julius Caesar*, Act III, Sc. II, 175 ff.

*Antony* . . . . .

You all do know this mantle . . . . .

. . . . .  
Look! in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:  
See what a rent the envious Casca made:  
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;  
And, as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,  
Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it.

. . . . .  
Kind souls, what! weep you when you but behold  
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,  
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

*Choephori*, 981 ff.

*Orestes* . . . Spread it out with your own hands; approach and stand about it, and show this net for a man, that our father . . . the Sun—may see my mother's unclean work . . .

Did she do it, or did she not?—Nay, I have a witness in this vesture, that it was dyed by Aegisthus' sword. It is the welling blood which hath aided time in spoiling the many hues of the embroidery.—At last, at last, he himself is before me; I utter his praises; I make his lament.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Shakespeare Once More," 1868. Cf. *Lowell's Writings*, Vol. III, Cambridge, Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1890.

<sup>2</sup> "Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar" in *Studies in Shakespeare* by J. Churton Collins, Westminster, A. Constable and Co., 1904.

<sup>3</sup> This and the following extract are taken from the literal translation by A. W. Verrall in his edition of *The 'Choephori' of Aeschylus*, London, Macmillan and Co., 1893.

2. The ghost scene at the banquet in *Macbeth* is more than a little reminiscent of the conclusion of the *Choephoroi*, in which the Furies of the murdered Clytemnestra appear to Orestes the matricide, but are invisible to the others.

*Macbeth*, Act III, Sc. IV. 50 ff.

*Macbeth*.....never shake  
Thy gory locks at me.  
.....

*Lady M.*  
This is the very painting of your fear;  
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,  
Led you to Duncan.  
.....  
*Macb.* If I stand here, I saw him.

*Choephoroi*, 1046 ff.

*Orestes.* Oh, see, see!  
Are those slave-women? Gorgon like . . . with raiment dusk . . . and multitude of branching snakes!

*Citizen.* What fancies whirl thee . . . ?

*Or.* There is no fancy in this trouble for me. In very truth these are my mother's enraged pursuers.

*Cit.* It is because the blood is yet fresh upon thy hands: hence the confusion that invades thy brain.

.....  
*Or.* Ye do not see them, but I do.

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